
New Hampshire
*Department of Agriculture,
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Getting What You Pay For

January 2005
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Bureau of Weights & Measures

Investigators for the bureau of weights and measures are charged by statute to “promote the general objective of accuracy in the determination and representation of quantity in commercial transactions.” In plain language, they make sure that you get what you pay for.

An investigator recently had to issue a stop-use order at a gasoline station in the southern part of the state. He found that the majority of the pumps were “jumping” or advancing up to 79¢ before delivery of any fuel. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that this might have been the case for some time. We are thankful that a customer took the time to notify us of her observation.

Another customer informed us that a display of one-gallon jugs of bar and chain oil at a retail outlet appeared to be filled at random levels. We found that the jugs not only appeared short measure, they were in actuality 10 ounces short on average. The quantity sold numbered in the tens of thousands throughout not only New Hampshire but also northern New England.

It seems that like yesterday that we were buying most deli meats for about \$3 to \$4 a pound. Today, prices are ranging from \$4 to \$10 a pound, and up. What if the clerk includes the weight of a plastic bag that weighs 0.02 pounds? At \$7 a pound, that would result in an overcharge of 14¢. Multiply that times 500 sales a day over one year and you have overcharges totaling over \$25,000.

So how does a customer protect his or her interest when purchasing commodities over a scale or a gas pump?

Be sure the attendant or you are using the correct pump. The octane rating and the price per gallon should be clearly marked on each pump.

Be sure the pump is set to zero before any gasoline is pumped.

Watch the scale and the amount registered. The scale should be positioned so that you can see the weighing operation and the price, weight and total price indications.

Make sure the scale is on zero. If the clerk puts your purchase in a bag before weighing, the scale should show a minus sign, e.g., -0.06 lb. **Pay only for the product, not for the packaging.** (Note—the weight of packaging can be significant. Most wax-lined bags used to contain lobsters, for example, weigh about 0.12 lb. At \$8.00 per pound, this could result in an overcharge of 96 cents—and some clerks double bag.)

Please take the time to inform the bureau if you suspect any inaccuracies in your purchases. We will be happy to follow up on any tip that you give us. Contact:

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